



Important
Answers to

Frequently Asked Questions

*for Marriage &
Family Therapist
Trainees &
Interns*

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Marriage and Family Therapist Trainee and Intern Frequently Asked Questions



The information provided in this publication is supplemental and is intended to serve as a quick answer guide for common questions for those pursuing licensure as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. The Board's *Statutes and Regulations* contain the official legal code sections and language. The BBS encourages you to thoroughly read the *Statutes and Regulations* pertaining to the marriage and family therapy profession.

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1. Should I be concerned about abandonment of my application?

Yes – and abandonment could have major consequences. Once an application is abandoned, an applicant may reapply, but must pay a new application fee and meet all current requirements. If an *Examination Eligibility Application* is abandoned, the applicant would lose any hours of experience that are more than six (6) years old (exception: see question #4), based on the date the board receives the new *Examination Eligibility Application*. See question #4 for more information about the six-year rule.

In accordance with Title 16, California Code of Regulations section 1806, an application shall be deemed abandoned in any of the following circumstances:

- Applicant does not submit the remaining documents or information requested in the application deficiency letter within one (1) year from the date of the deficiency letter
- Applicant does not complete the application within one (1) year after it has been filed.
- Applicant does not sit for an examination within one (1) year after being notified of initial eligibility to take the examination.
- Applicant does not take an examination within one (1) year from the date the applicant was notified of failing an examination
- The applicant fails to pay the initial license fee within one (1) year after notification by the board of successful completion of MFT licensing requirements.

Regulations cited: Title 16, California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 1806

2. Now that my Intern registration has been issued, can I start practicing independently or open my own office?

No. Independent practice cannot begin until you have completed all licensure requirements and the Board issues you a license as a LMFT. Independent practice by a MFT Intern or Trainee is considered unlicensed practice and is subject to disciplinary action by the Board. Additionally, Interns and Trainees cannot bill clients directly.

Statutes cited: B&P Code sections 4980, 4980.10 and 4982

3. What is the breakdown for the required hours of experience to become a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)?

California law currently requires 3,000 hours of supervised professional experience, including 104 supervised weeks, in order to qualify for LMFT licensure. The experience requirements are different depending on when the hours were gained, as shown in the following chart.

MFT EXPERIENCE CATEGORIES – MINIMUMS & MAXIMUMS

Category	<i>Prior to 01/01/2010</i>	<i>Between 01/01/2010 & 01/01/2012</i>	<i>After 01/01/2012</i>
Psychotherapy with Individuals	No Minimum or Maximum	No change	No change
Psychotherapy with Couples, Families and/or Children	Minimum 500 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 500 hours • The first 150 hours of conjoint treatment can be double counted 	No change
Group Therapy/Counseling	Maximum 500 hours	No change	No change
Telemedicine/Telehealth Counseling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telemedicine: 125 hours Maximum • Phone Counseling: 250 hrs. Maximum 	Maximum 375 hours	No change

MAXIMUMS FOR COMBINED CATEGORIES

Prior to January 1, 2010

Categories	Maximum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administering and Evaluating Psychological Tests • Writing Clinical Reports, Progress Notes or Process Notes 	Maximum 250 hours combined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max. 250 hours of Workshops, Seminars, Training, Conferences • Maximum 100 hours of Personal Psychotherapy Received* • Direct Supervisor Contact** 	Maximum 1,000 hours combined

Between January 1, 2010 & January 1, 2012

Categories	Maximum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administering and Evaluating Psychological Tests • Writing Clinical Reports, Progress Notes or Process Notes 	Maximum 250 hours combined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max. 250 hours of Workshops, Seminars, Training, Conferences • Maximum 100 hours of Personal Psychotherapy Received* • Client Centered Advocacy • Direct Supervisor Contact** 	Maximum 1,250 hours combined

After January 1, 2012

Categories	Maximum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administering and Evaluating Psychological Tests • Writing Clinical Reports, Progress Notes or Process Notes • Client Centered Advocacy 	Maximum 500 hours combined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max. 250 hours of Workshops, Seminars, Training, Conferences • Maximum 100 hours of Personal Psychotherapy Received* • Direct Supervisor Contact** 	Maximum 1,000 hours combined

* May be triple-counted to total 300 hours

** Includes both individual and group supervision

Additionally, the following limitations on hours of experience apply:

- Maximum 1,300 hours gained pre-degree
- Maximum 750 hours of counseling and direct supervisor contact gained pre-degree
- Maximum 40 hours of experience earned in any week
- Maximum six (6) hours of individual or group supervision in any week

Applicants must also possess 104 supervised weeks:

These 104 weeks must contain:

- One (1) hour of individual or two (2) hours of group supervision during **any** week in which experience is claimed
- 52 weeks in which the applicant received at least one (1) hour of **individual** supervision

An applicant for examination eligibility cannot be approved to sit for the licensing exams without completing both the 3,000 hours of experience AND 104 supervised weeks.

Statutes and Regulations cited: B&P Code section 4980.43; Title 16 CCR section 1833

4. How far back can hours of experience be counted? What is the 6-year rule?

The Board cannot accept hours of experience (including personal psychotherapy and workshops, training or conferences) that are older than six (6) years from the date the Board receives your *Examination Eligibility Application*, EXCEPT that up to 500 hours of supervised experience obtained as a Trainee while enrolled in practicum can be older than six (6) years.

For example, the Board receives an *Examination Eligibility Application* on 03/24/2010. The Board can only accept hours earned by this applicant between 03/24/2004 and 03/24/2010 (except that up to 500 counseling and supervision hours obtained while a Trainee will be accepted even if they are older than 03/24/2004).

Statute cited: B&P Code section 4980.43

5. What types of hours can I count as a Trainee?

A Trainee is permitted to earn a maximum of 1,300 hours of experience overall prior to the degree being awarded. Up to 750 hours of counseling and supervision are permitted within the 1,300-hour maximum.

Statute cited: B&P Code section 4980.43

6. Do I need to register as a Trainee with the Board?

No, the Board does not register MFT Trainees.

7. As a Trainee, when can I begin counting pre-degree hours of work experience? Must I be enrolled in practicum in order to counsel clients?

Trainees can only begin counting hours of experience if the student has completed a minimum of 12 semester or 18 quarter units of coursework in a qualifying MFT degree program. The one exception is Personal Psychotherapy hours, which can count from the date a person begins his or her degree program.

Trainees who are enrolled a degree program that meets the new “2012” requirements must be enrolled in a practicum course in order to provide counseling to clients. However, there is one exception. A Trainee may provide counseling while not enrolled in practicum if BOTH of the following are met:

- The period of time is less than 90 calendar days AND
- The 90-day (or shorter) period is immediately preceded by enrollment in practicum and immediately followed by enrollment in practicum (or completion of the degree program).

For example, if your practicum course ended on May 29, and you are not taking a summer practicum course, you may see clients for the next 90 days PROVIDED you are enrolled in another practicum course that starts by August 27, or you graduate by August 27.

Statutes cited: B&P Code sections 4980.03, 4980.36 and 4980.42

8. Can I count hours of experience after I graduate but before I receive an Intern registration number?

It depends on (1) the time frame during which you submit your intern application to the Board, and (2) the type of setting in which you would be working during that time. If you apply for an intern registration within 90 days of your degree award date, and are thereafter issued an intern registration, all postdegree hours of experience may be credited. However, this is not permitted in a private practice setting, and there are no exceptions.

Statute cited: B&P Code section 4980.43

9. Can I begin work in a private practice setting without having an Intern registration number? Can I work in a private practice under my second Intern registration number?

No. Only those who have been issued a first intern registration number may work in a private practice. Interns issued a subsequent registration may NOT work in a private practice setting. Trainees are never permitted to work in a private practice.

Statutes and Regulations cited: B&P Code sections 4980.43 and 4984.01; Title 16 CCR section 1833

10. Can I be paid as a 1099 independent contractor while a Trainee or Intern? Can I be employed as a volunteer? What type of documentation does the Board require?

All Interns and Trainees must be paid W-2 employees or volunteer employees. Trainees and Interns cannot bill clients directly.

If a Paid Employee: You must provide a W-2 for each year of paid employment with your *Examination Eligibility Application*.

If-a Volunteer Employee: You must provide a letter from your employer verifying your status as a volunteer with your *Examination Eligibility Application*. A sample letter verifying volunteer status is available on the Board's website.

Statutes and Regulations cited: B&P Code section 4980.43; Title 16, CCR section 1833

11. Do I need to send in originals of my W-2s or most recent pay stub with my Examination Eligibility Application?

Photocopies of W-2s are acceptable. For the current tax year, you must include a photocopy of your most recent pay stub. W-2s are required for all prior tax years during which you gained experience. A copy of your 1040 or other tax filing form is not acceptable.

Statutes and Regulations cited: B&P Code section 4980.43; Title 16, CCR section 1833

12. How do I determine the amount of supervision I need each week? What is the difference between the supervision requirements for MFT Trainees and Interns? What is the required ratio of supervision to client contact hours?

“One unit” of supervision = one (1) hour of individual OR two (2) hours of group.

Trainees must receive at least one unit of supervisor contact for every five (5) hours of psychotherapy or counseling performed, and in each setting.

Interns and intern applicants must receive one unit of supervision for the first 10 hours of counseling experience performed in any week in each setting. Interns must receive one additional unit of supervision during any week in which more than 10 hours of psychotherapy or counseling are performed in each setting.

The above supervision ratios only apply to direct counseling/psychotherapy hours (includes Individual Psychotherapy; Couples, Family, and Children; Group Psychotherapy; and Telemedicine/Telehealth Counseling).

TRAINEE - EXAMPLE #1: A Trainee works one job and provides 16 hours of psychotherapy during a single week. This Trainee must have four (4) units of supervision during that week.

TRAINEE - EXAMPLE #2: A Trainee works two jobs, and provides 4 hours of psychotherapy at Job A, and 7 hours at Job B during a single week. This Trainee must have two (2) units of supervision during that week (one unit at each work setting).

INTERN - EXAMPLE #1: An intern works one job and provides 25 hours of psychotherapy during a single week. This intern must have two (2) units of supervision during that week.

INTERN - EXAMPLE #2: An intern works two jobs, and provides 12 hours of psychotherapy at Job A and nine (9) hours at Job B during the same week. This intern is required a total of three (3) units of supervision during that week - two (2) units for the first work setting and one (1) unit for the second work setting.

Statute cited: B&P Code section 4980.43

13. How many supervisees can participate in a session of group supervision?

Group supervision sessions shall include no more than eight (8) persons receiving supervision, even if there are two or more supervisors present.

Statutes and Regulations cited: B&P Code section 4980.43; Title 16, CCR section 1833

14. Can group supervision be broken into one-hour increments?

Group supervision can be broken into one-hour sessions, as long as both increments (full two hours) are provided in the same week as the experience being claimed.

Statute cited: B&P Code section 4980.43

15. Can I receive supervision via videoconferencing or over the telephone?

An MFT Intern working for a governmental entity; school, college, or university; or an institution that is both nonprofit and charitable may obtain supervision via live two-way videoconferencing. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the client confidentiality is preserved. Trainees are not permitted to receive supervision in this manner.

Individual or group supervision may not be provided over the telephone, as supervision must consist of face-to-face contact.

Statute cited: B&P Code section 4980.43

16. Do my supervisor and I have to be employed by the same employer? Does my supervisor need to be on site?

Only in a private practice setting does a supervisor need to be employed by, and practice at, the same site as the registrant's employer. In a setting that is not a private practice, the supervisor may be employed by the Trainee's, Intern's, or applicant's employer on either a paid or voluntary basis. If such employment is on a voluntary basis, a written agreement that addresses the supervisor's and employer's legal responsibilities must be signed by the supervisor and the employer prior to commencement of supervision.

The agreement must contain an acknowledgement by the employer that the employer:

- Is aware of the licensing requirements that must be met by the intern or trainee and agrees not to interfere with the supervisor's legal and ethical obligations to ensure compliance with those requirements; and
- Agrees to provide the supervisor access to clinical records of the clients counseled by the intern or trainee.

Please see the Board's website for a sample "letter of agreement."

In any setting, Trainees, Interns, and applicants may only perform services at the place where their employers regularly conduct business, which may include performing services at other locations, so long as the services are performed under the direction and control of their employer and supervisor, and in compliance with the laws and regulations pertaining to supervision.

Whether a supervisor is required to be on site depends on the situation. Supervisors must consider their responsibilities as defined in the LMFT statutes and regulations, which includes taking responsibility for, and control of, the quality of services being provided. Among other responsibilities, supervisors are required to do all of the following, whether they are on site or off site:

- Ensure that the extent, kind and quality of counseling performed by the intern or trainee is consistent with the education, training and experience of the person being supervised.
- Review client/patient records and monitor and evaluate assessment, diagnosis and treatment decisions of the intern or trainee.
- Monitor and evaluate the ability of the intern or trainee to provide services at the site(s) where he or she will be practicing and to the particular clientele being served.
- Ensure compliance with all laws and regulations governing the practice of marriage and family therapy.

Upon request by the Board, a supervisor is required to provide the board with documentation that verifies the supervisor's compliance with all requirements.

Statutes and Regulations cited: B&P Code section 4980.43; Title 16, CCR sections 1833 and 1833.1

17. Where do I record Personal Psychotherapy hours I've received? Must I be under supervision while receiving Personal Psychotherapy?

The Board does not have a specific form for recording Personal Psychotherapy hours. These hours are logged on the *Examination Eligibility Application*, available on the Board's website. Personal Psychotherapy received is not classified as "work experience" and therefore does not require supervision.

Statute cited: B&P Code section 4980.43

18. When I submit my Examination Eligibility Application, do I need to separate hours gained pre-degree from hours gained post-degree? Do I need to separate hours gained prior to 01/01/2010 and hours gained on or after 01/01/2010? What about hours gained on or after 01/01/2012?

Submit your pre-degree and post-degree hours on separate *Experience Verification* forms. Be sure to use the *Experience Verification* and weekly log forms that are designed for the particular time frame (hours earned prior to 2010 vs. hours earned on or after 2010). NOTE: Although minor changes were made to supervised experience requirements beginning in 2012, no changes to these forms were necessary.

Submission of forms as directed above will lessen the possibility that the licensing evaluator will need to request additional information from you, which delays the approval of your application.

19. Who can supervise MFT Trainees or Interns?

Only licensed mental health professionals can supervise Trainees, Interns, and intern applicants. Licensed mental health professionals include any of the following:

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs)
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs)
- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs) (must have met education and experience requirements that allow the LPCC to treat couples and families)
- Licensed Psychologists
- Licensed Physicians certified in Psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

Additionally, the supervisor must meet all of the following:

- Maintain a current valid California license
- Have held that license for at least two (2) years prior to the commencement of supervision*
- Have practiced psychotherapy or directly supervised trainees, interns, or associate clinical social workers who perform psychotherapy as part of their clinical practice for at least two (2) years within the last five (5) years.

- Complete a minimum of six (6) hours of supervision training or coursework within 60 days of commencement of supervision and every two-year renewal period thereafter (Psychologists and Psychiatrists are exempt from this training requirement).

*Licensees who provide supervision ONLY to Trainees at an academic institution which offers a qualifying degree program, may use time licensed in another state to count toward the total two (2) years of licensure required.

Statutes and Regulations cited: B&P Code section 4980.03; Title 16, CCR section 1833.1

20. What is the definition of “telehealth counseling”?

Up to 375 hours of supervised experience may be gained providing personal psychotherapy, crisis counseling, or other counseling services via telehealth. This may include telephone counseling. Telehealth refers to the mode of delivering health care services and public health via information and communication technologies to facilitate the diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management, and self-management of a patient’s health care while the patient is at the originating site and the health care provider is at a distant site.

Statute cited: B&P Code sections 2290.5 and 4980.43

21. What additional coursework do I need to complete? Must I complete this coursework prior to submitting my Intern application?

In addition to holding a qualifying degree, an applicant must complete specific courses prior to submitting an *Examination Eligibility Application*. The requirements are different depending on the following:

- **Applicants who attended a California school and began graduate study on or AFTER August 1, 2012:**

If your degree was earned in California, ALL “additional coursework” **must be incorporated into your degree program** as specified in Business and Professions Code section 4980.36. There are no exceptions. Please check with your school if you have any concerns.

- **Applicants who earned a degree in another state OR**
- **Applicants who attended a California school and began graduate study PRIOR TO August 1, 2012 (and complete that study prior to December 31, 2018):**

You may apply for MFT Intern registration without completing all the required additional coursework listed on the following page. This coursework only needs to be complete at the time you submit your *Examination Eligibility Application*.

In-State Applicants: Most graduates from in-state programs have already met the additional coursework requirements, which are noted by Board staff when your intern application is evaluated (though not required at that time). If you have not

completed a course, you must submit documentation of completion when submitting your *Examination Eligibility Application*.

Some schools cover these topics within the degree program. If you are unsure whether a course was part of your degree program, a list of schools and coursework not included is available on the Board's website.

Out-of-State Applicants: Graduates from out-of-state programs must complete the courses listed in the chart prior to submitting an *Examination Eligibility Application*.

Statutes and Regulations cited: B&P Code sections 4980.39, 4980.395, 4980.41, 4980.80 and 4980.90; Title 16, CCR sections 1807, 1807.2 and 1810

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK REQUIRED		
Course	Required of:	Length / Content Required
Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting	Applicants who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 hours • Must be based on California law • See Title 16, CCR section 1807.2
Human Sexuality	Applicants who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 hours • See Title 16, CCR section 1807
Alcoholism, Chemical Substance Abuse and Dependency	Applicants who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 hours • See Title 16, CCR section 1810
Aging, Long Term Care and Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse	Applicants who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 hours • See BPC section 4980.39
Spousal/Partner Abuse Assessment, Detection and Intervention	IN-STATE APPLICANTS who entered a degree program between 01/01/1995 & 08/01/2012*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific number of hours for those who entered a degree program prior to 12/31/03, but must be of sufficient length to cover the topics of assessment, detection and intervention • 15 hours for those who entered a degree program after 1/1/2004 • See BPC section 4980.41
	OUT-OF-STATE APPLICANTS (those with out-of-state education or licensure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 hours • See BPC section 4980.41
Psychological Testing	IN-STATE APPLICANTS who entered a degree program between 01/01/2001 & 08/01/2012*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 semester or 3 quarter units • See BPC section 4980.41
	OUT-OF-STATE APPLICANTS (those with out-of-state education or licensure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 semester or 3 quarter units • See BPC sections 4980.80 & 4980.90

(continued on next page)

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK REQUIRED *(continued)*

Course	Required of:	Length / Content Required
Psychopharmacology	IN-STATE APPLICANTS who entered a degree program between 01/01/2001 & 08/01/2012*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 semester or 3 quarter units See BPC section 4980.41
	OUT-OF-STATE APPLICANTS (those with out-of-state education or licensure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 semester or 3 quarter units See BPC sections 4980.80 & 4980.90
California Law and Professional Ethics	IN-STATE APPLICANTS who entered a degree program prior to 08/01/2012*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 semester or 3 quarter units See BPC section 4980.41
	LICENSED OUT-OF-STATE APPLICANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If degree contains a 2 semester or 3 quarter unit course on law and ethics, applicant must complete an 18-hour California course. See BPC section 4980.80 If degree does not contain a 2 semester or 3 quarter unit course on law and ethics, applicant must take 2 semester or 3 quarter unit California course
	UNLICENSED OUT-OF-STATE APPLICANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take a 2 semester unit or 3 quarter unit California Law and Ethics course. See BPC section 4980.90

**This topic is still required for those who entered a degree program after 08/01/2012, however, it must be incorporated into the degree program.*

22. When do I need to send in supervision-related forms?

All supervision-related forms (Supervisor Responsibility Statement and Experience Verification) must be submitted with your *Examination Eligibility Application*.

Do not send the *Weekly Summary of Hours of Experience* form unless the Board specifically requests you to do so.

Regulations cited: Title 16, CCR sections 1833 and 1833.1

23. How can I provide verification of my experience if my supervisor can no longer be located?

The Board will review documentation on a case by case basis in order to make a determination. However, we recommend that you submit all of the following:

- Documentation of your attempts to locate and contact your supervisor
- The previously signed, original *Supervisor Responsibility Statement*
- The previously signed, original weekly logs

- Documentation by the employer verifying employment of the supervisor and supervisee
- The letter of agreement for supervision if your supervisor was not employed by your employer

Statute cited: B&P Code section 4980.43

24. Do I need to resubmit fingerprints with my Examination Eligibility Application or for a subsequent Intern registration number?

Applicants do not need to resubmit fingerprints if one or more of the following applies at the time the Board receives the application:

- Applicant still possesses a current Intern registration number
- Applicant's Intern number has been cancelled for less than 30 days
- Applicant is in the exam cycle.

Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1815

25. What happens once I submit my "Examination Eligibility" Application?

The Board will evaluate your application and notify you either that:

- There are one or more deficiencies in your application. You will have one (1) year from the date of initial deficiency notice to clear up all deficiencies

OR

- You have been found eligible to take the examinations, and will be provided with information on how to register.

If you fail an exam, you will be given instructions on applying to retake it. You will have one (1) year from the date you failed the exam to retake it. You can retake an exam once every 180 days.

Once you pass both required exams: The Board will send you a letter along with a *Request for Initial License Issuance* form, which you must submit with the required fee. Your license will be issued within 30 business days from the date of receipt.

Regulation cited: Title 16, CCR section 1806

26. Do I need to maintain a current Intern registration number to participate in the examinations?

The Intern registration and the examination process are separate matters. Once your hours have been approved and you are in the exam cycle they are unrelated. However, you are required to keep an active and current registration if you are continuing to gain

hours or if you are working in any setting OTHER THAN a school, a government agency, or an institution that is both nonprofit and charitable. Also, you may want to check with your employer to see if they require you to remain registered.

Statute cited: B&P Code sections 4980.01 and 4980.43

27. Must I continue to have supervision while in the exam process?

All applicants, trainees, and registrants must be under supervision at all times by an acceptable licensed mental health professional.

Statute cited: B&P Code section 4980.43

28. Once I pass my exams, can I start practicing independently?

No. A successful examinee still must submit a *Request for Initial License Issuance* form and fee before the Board will issue a MFT license. This form will be provided to the applicant upon completion of all licensure requirements. Independent practice cannot begin until the Board issues a license. Otherwise it is considered unlicensed practice, which is subject to disciplinary action by the Board.

Statute cited: B&P Code sections 4980 and 4982